

It occurs to me that, had I been speaking here three years ago today, about how we could strengthen Alberta and Canada, I would have been proposing that we dismantle the National Energy Program, replace the Foreign Investment Review Agency, get the federal deficit down, improve relations between Ottawa and the provinces, and wake up to our problems and our opportunities in international trade.

We don't need to talk about those goals anymore. The federal deficit is billions of dollars lower than it would have been under the old regime.

We have taken action to remove those artificial barriers to Alberta's growth. FIRA - the Foreign Investment Review Agency - is gone. Canagrex is being dismantled. Privatization is well begun.

Internationally, we have entered serious negotiations with our single largest trading partner, to secure and enhance access to that critical U. S. market. Equally important, we have been successful in securing a clean launch of a comprehensive new round of GATT negotiations.

I will discuss these two key initiatives at greater length later. But first, look at the energy industry here in Alberta. Let's set the record straight on the NEP, and how this Government of Canada responded.

The National Energy Program of the old Liberal Government - with the full support of the NDP - was based on the belief that governments could run the oil industry better than the private sector.

It used the tax system to direct where exploration and development should occur, and invoked the power of government regulations to try to impose Ottawa's priorities on exploration and service companies, large and small, and on provincial governments.

That attempted state control was a disaster, particularly for Western Canada. I fought it when it was introduced, and we dismantled it when our new government was elected. As usual, state control spawned a new "alphabet soup of taxes and programs" - the "PIP" grants, the "COSC" the "PGRT". Those are all behind us now.

Our new approach was based on two principles - first cooperation by Ottawa with the provinces and the industry: second, a recognition that market forces are a better basis for energy policy than state control.

Soon after coming to power, the Mulroney government signed the Western Accord. At one stroke, a long list of unfair and discriminatory taxes which discouraged